

First Round Battalion Family Readiness Group

Letter From Battalion Commander

January 2006

Happy New Year and I hope you all had a great holiday season. Let me start off by once again thanking all of you for everything you do. Without you supporting your Soldier, the Unit, the FRG and the community our mission would be so much harder. While you may feel your contributions are minimal, I can only tell you that they are not. You are having an impact even if it goes unnoticed for time to time. You may also feel overwhelmed by how much you contribute, just remember to meter yourself and contribute as much as you feel you can.

We had a great past month. The Red Leg Express is rolling and taking the theater by storm. The good news is, because of that, the folks up here in Baghdad get to see our men (and ladies) a lot and for that I am grateful. On the average we have 5 to 10 Soldiers from the truck battery visiting each week. While they are here they take advantage of our excellent Mess Halls, see the palaces and, sometimes, they just sit around the mayor cell and relax. I am glad we get to visit with them so much. CSM Hall is going to visit the battery at the end of the month and then I get to go visit sometime in March.

Up here in Baghdad we are just as busy. We are just finishing up our transition bringing new folks in while the old folks are leaving after a very successful 1-year tour. When it is all said and done, we will have transited about 16,000 soldiers thru little old Camp Victory. Thanks to a lot of hard work by all of our Soldiers, it has gone pretty smooth.

I promised back in July I would try to keep you updated on transformation. This is what I know right now. The first thing is that no decisions have been made; it looks like 2 to 4 Artillery battalions will inactivate, but due to our lineage 5-3FA should be OK. We do know that no matter what, nothing will happen with transformation until the entire battalion redeploys and reintegrates. I would imagine we will continue to get information over the next few months and I will keep you updated.

Ok folks, one more month down, keep up the great work, thanks for all you do and please remember to take care of yourselves.

First Round!
Tracy Banister
LTC, FA
Commanding

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A Picture with Santa from the December FRG Holiday party.

Letter From HET Battery Commander

I would like to wish a happy New Year to all the 5-3 Soldiers, family members, and friends. We've had quite the unique holiday season. The Redlegs continue to make strong ties and a solid reputation throughout theatre. Due to the current spike in operations, we were forced to have the "12 Days of Christmas" routine for the Soldiers. It started with the Christmas party on Christmas Day. We shared a few moments with the Soldiers that were in Kuwait at that time, passed out presents and the stockings, and watched the video from the FRG. Thank you all for submitting the pictures, it meant a lot to the guys! As other Soldiers returned from convoys, they too, were given presents and stockings. It worked out well. I would like to thank the FRG members and Rear Detachment personnel who worked tirelessly to create a Christmas away from home for us.

Let me take this opportunity to make a quick public service announcement. As I said we have seen some very busy times over the past month. The Soldiers are getting some great convoy experience. They all prefer to be on the road more than at Camp Arifjan. Most of the Soldiers spend the lion's share of their time on missions. Also, when they are on a convoy, time is normally very limited. There is often only enough time when they stop to get some rest before they have to get rolling again. So, if your Soldier doesn't call you for a couple weeks, they may just not be getting the time to do so. There is nothing abnormal about this. I know it is virtually impossible to keep from being worried about your Soldier, but please be assured in the fact that we know absolutely everything that happens on these convoys wherever they go. No news is good news if they don't call for a while.

As 2005 closed out we have seen some rough times in our ranks. Both the Bates and Barnett families have experienced lost loved ones in recent weeks. Our hearts and prayers are with both families.

However, there has been reason for joy as well. Over the past couple of months six new Redlegs have arrived. Congratulations to the Cresta, Verner, Johnson, Hansen, Barnett, and Stone families on your new addition to the family.

As 2006 unfolds please take a moment to catch your breath and gain some perspective on life. The New Year gives us the opportunity to start from scratch. A blank slate has been provided. If 2005 was a good year for you, great – savor the memory. However, if it wasn't – realize that the past is exactly that – the past! You certainly can't change it – so don't dwell over it. Look to the future and what the New Year can provide you. Make a list of all the things you want to do this year and do them! Take note of the numerous special occasions you have to look forward to. Remember, R & R leave periods are about to begin in February and now that 2006 has arrived we can all say, "I'll see you later this year!"

May God bless you. Take care of each other. We'll see you soon.

Sincerely,

JOHN M. TYLER
CPT, FA
B/5-3 FA (CBT HET) CDR
"REDLEGS!"



"...we have seen some very busy times over the past month. The Soldiers are getting some great convoy experience."

Letter From Rear Detachment Commander

Happy New Year!

Hope the holiday season was good for all of you! I look forward to the upcoming year, and I know all of us want it to go by fast. I am proud of how strong our families are being, and we will make sure that the FRG program remains vital and improves itself through the year.

We are making strides throughout the program. Our website will be in full swing very shortly. Check it out by going to <http://sill-www.army.mil/3ca/17web/17bde/17bde.htm>. The 5-3 tab is at the top of the page. For our families with their Soldiers in the ASG, the 17th FAB FRG website has great info and pictures from Baghdad. Our FRG meetings are always a great time to mix with the other families, get information about the Soldiers and

helpful hints and classes to help you thrive during the deployment. We also have added a social event every month, where you can unwind with your fellow family members. This month features a free Chinese Food Diner and Valentine's Day Craft making for your spouse (Jan 28th, 5:30pm in 5-3 FA conference Room).

I encourage you to take advantage of the programs at ACS. Spouses Night Out is offering free tickets to the Cameron Women's Basketball game this month. There is a great seminar, "Equipping Families for Deployment", this month from 20-21 January for you and your children to attend. The seminar was set up by military spouses, and it's reputed to be an awesome experience. Of course, as always, ACS is continuing their educational programs

this year. They have a variety of classes. Call 580-442-5018 for more information.

Lastly, we have noticed that some local businesses are trying to take advantage of our family members. We are reporting these incidents to the Inspector General's office for further inquiry. If you feel that an auto shop, even a chain, or local home repair contractor is charging a very high price, contact us at Rear D or your FRG leadership. We will look into the matter and make sure you not getting ripped off.

Once again, Happy New Year. Look forward to seeing you!

CPT Mike Donahue
5-3 FA Rear Detachment Commander

New Postage Rates In Effect

We've all heard what a morale boost receiving mail is for our loved ones. Please be aware that as of January 8th, the postage rates increased. Among the changes, First-Class Mail stamps will increase from 37 cents to 39 cents, the postcard rate will increase by one cent to 24 cents, and the Priority Mail flat rate box increased from \$7.70 to \$8.10. To see all the postage rate changes, go to <http://www.usps.com/ratecase/welcome.htm?from=banmercommunication&page=rate>



There will be an FRG Social on Saturday, January 28 at 5:30 p.m. in the BN conference room. The social will include free Chinese food dinner and making Valentine's Day crafts for your valentine. A representative from Stampin' Up will show us how to make a card and goodybag. Supplies will be provided. Please RSVP to Jennifer Carter at 353-7736 or jennmariecarter@yahoo.com by January 23 to ensure there will be enough food and supplies.

MWR Events

Walk For Freedom

Show your support for our troops fighting the War on Terrorism by participating in Morale, Welfare and Recreation's Walk for Freedom. The event is open to the Lawton-Fort Sill community and the goal is 8000 miles from Jan. 6, 2006 to Jan. 5, 2007. You may participate in teams. Walkers can earn mileage points for every 30 minutes of sustained physical activity and bonus miles for attending some Fort Sill programs outlined in the Mileage Rewards program available online at www.sillmwr.com. For more information, call 442-3081.

Nye Library Offers Martin Luther King Jr. Display

Stop by Nye Library, 1640 Randolph Road, during January and check out the Martin Luther King, Jr. display to honor Dr. King's contributions to human rights. Call Nye Library at 442-3806 for more information or for the hours of operation. Jan. 16 is the official date for this year's observance of the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday.

Auto Craft Center Open House

The Auto Craft Center, 2503 Ringgold Road, will host an Open House Jan. 20 from 2 to 5 p.m. to showcase the facility. Everyone is welcome to see the state-of-the-art facility. The experienced auto technicians will be available to answer questions about the center and services offered. Refreshments will be served during the Open House, and guests are invited to tour the facility.

- The Auto Crafts Center offers a safety orientation each day 30 minutes after the opening time.
- The Auto Crafts Center offers brake jobs starting at \$50 an axle plus parts to get you to work safely on those cold mornings.
- The Auto Crafts Center offers a winter tune-up special: four cylinders cost \$30.99, six cylinders cost \$40.99, and eight cylinders will cost \$50.99.

These are the starting prices and include spark plugs, timing adjustment and carburetor adjustments where possible. Note: platinum plugs, vans and transverse mounted engine cost extra.

Stop by the Auto Crafts Center or call 442-5152. Hours of operation for services and bay rental are Wednesday thru Friday 1-9 p.m., and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Buddy Bowling Special Offered in January at Twin Oaks Bowling Center

January is Buddy Bowling month at Twin Oaks Bowling Center. Weekdays until 5 p.m. pay for yourself and your friend bowls free. Shoe Rental is not included. Call 442-2882 for more information.

Hourly Child Care Available at Tincher Child Development Center

Tincher Child Development Center has reopened their hourly childcare room. Hourly care for children, 6 weeks to 5 years old, is available for registered patrons. Registered patrons should call 442-2320 to reserve a space. For more information, call 442-3927.

Register for Fort Sill Body Building and Figure Classic in March

Registration is underway for the Fort Sill Body Building and Figure Classic "Tough as Diamonds" novice/amateur competition. The event is slated for March 11 at the Sheridan Road Theatre with prejudging at 9 a.m. and the show starts at 6 p.m. Weigh in is March 10 from 7-9 p.m. Guest poser for the event is Vickie Gates, founder and president of Strictly Fitness in Arlington, TX. Cost to participate is \$15 for active duty military, with an additional \$10 to compete in another category. Cost for Civilians to participate is \$25. Registration forms are available at the RecPlex and post fitness centers and must be postmarked by March 1, 2006. For more information, call 442-5623.

ACS Spouse's Night Out

Basketball: Saturday, 21 Jan., Ladies team plays at 2 p.m., Men's at 4 p.m., at the Cameron University Aggie Gym. Spouses of deployed service members will enjoy watching the Cameron Aggies play East Central University. Please call LaTonya Brown to reserve your tickets at 442-4577/5018. Tickets must be signed for and picked up at ACS from 11 Jan.—19 Jan. Sponsored by Cameron Athletic Department and ACS "Families United" Programs.

Check all the classes and activities Army Community Service has to offer at <http://sill-www.army.mil/acs/>

Equipping Families During Deployment

Friday, 20 January and Saturday, 21 January at the at the Patriot Club. Register early to ensure you receive the resource packet and childcare! Equipping Families during Deployment will encourage and assist spouses, teens, and children in making a success of family separation and military deployment. The core of the seminar will be the Wives of Warriors (WoW) program. WoW is a ministry of hope and encouragement for military wives who experience short-term separations and deployments. Fun, creative, and age-appropriate sessions for teens and elementary-age children will also be provided. Watch care for children up to age 5 will be available at the Tincher Child Development Center. The deadline to register has been extended to January 17, 2006.

Ten Tips For Paying Bills On Time

Paying your bills on time is one of the most basic but important things you can do to maintain or build up a good credit record. Late payments cost you money -- as much as \$50 per month -- and can also have a negative impact on your credit record. Here are some suggestions for staying on top of your bills.

- 1. Figure out when all of your bills are due.** It's impossible to pay your bills on time if you're not sure when they are due. Note when you receive your regular bills and how much time you have before they are due.
- 2. Call your creditors and request that your billing cycle be changed to make it most convenient for you.** You may find it easier to pay your bills if they are all due at the same time of the month. Or you could switch your billing cycle so that it matches your paycheck cycle.
- 3. Set up automatic payments for as many bills as possible.** When you set up an automatic payment out of your checking account, your creditors get the money electronically -- you never have to write a check or mail a bill.
- 4. Pay your bills online.** Many banks offer online checking and most of them let you set up automatic payments or pay bills online whenever you want.

5. Create a bill-paying spot at home. Separate your bills from other mail and keep them all in one place. Store stamps, checks, and envelopes in the same place

so that you have everything you need when you sit down to pay your bills.

6. Set reminders in your email program. If you tend to forget about bills, a monthly reminder in your e-mail program may help you stay on track.

7. Write down reminders on your home calendar.

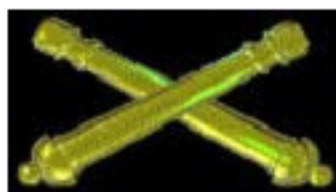
8. Create a personal budget.

9. If more than one person in your family pays the bills, make sure that you both have a good system for paying them on time.

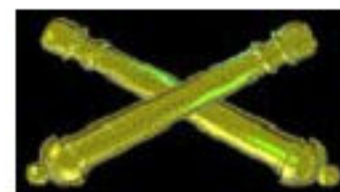
10. Resolve to never pay a late fee again!

This article is a reprint of the Military OneSource Life Article entitled, 'Ten Tips for Paying Bills on Time'.

To view the article online visit the Military OneSource Web site: www.militaryonesource.com. On the homepage go to 'How May We Help You?', select 'Financial', 'Budgeting', and 'Overextended with Bills'.



Rear Detachment Contact Numbers



5th BN 3rd FA, Rear Detachment OIC: CPT Donahue.....442-5517

5th BN 3rd FA, Rear Detachment NCOIC: 1SG Childs.....442-8081

5-3 FA Rear Detachment CFA/Family Readiness Liaison: SSG Vanoven.....442-2308